



Engine 16, located at 13th & K Streets, NW, was all decked out for a Homeland Security Summit on August 5. (See story page 3.)

# The Siren

THE DC FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Summer 2003

## The DC Fire and EMS Siren

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Photos by Alan Etter.



Anthony A. Williams, Mayor  
The Government of District of Columbia

DC Fire & EMS Department

## A Message from the Chief

Adrian H. Thompson

We are once again moving to strengthen our ability to respond to your needs. On August 12th, we began a pilot program designed to expand paramedic coverage on our EMS units. The new configuration pairs a paramedic with an emergency medical technician (EMT). Currently, advanced life support (ALS) units have two paramedics, and basic life support (BLS) units have two EMTs. The new staffing struc-

ture will allow us to get more paramedics to more medical emergencies more often.

We are initially studying six units, but we fully expect to expand this program at the end of the 180-day examination period.



It is my goal to have an all ALS system with a paramedic aboard every EMS unit. Further, it is my vision to have a firefighter/paramedic aboard every fire engine, ladder truck and rescue squad. That will further reduce the amount

of time it takes us to get quality medical care to you.

As we move forward into the next fiscal year, you will notice even more improvements to our fire and EMS service. We are constantly upgrading our equipment, and we are constantly adding training to enhance our personnel's ability to deliver service to you.

## 32 Engine/16 Truck Host Rescued Family

Ebony Cunningham never expected this: the firefighters who rescued her from her burning apartment organizing an open house in her honor. It was a special day at Engine 32's firehouse with food and fun for children.

Two days before Christmas last year, a fire started in Cunningham's Christmas tree. She lived with her four children on the top floor of a three-story building in the 2300 block of Jasper Rd., SE. A passerby, Eric Conyers, saw the commotion and stood under the window as Cunningham dropped her children, ages five months to six years, out the window into

Conyers' arms. As the baby was dropped to safety, firefighters from Truck 16 and Engine 32 arrived to help Cunningham and her boyfriend out the window and down the ladder to safety.

Firefighters presented Cunningham with a plaque commemorating her courage, and they also presented her with a \$400 check to help her make Christmas this year even more special.



Battalion Fire Chief Al Jeffrey (l) was the incident commander at the fire last year in which Ebony Cunningham showed bravery in resourcefulness in saving her children.



# DC's Oldest Firefighter Is Named Honorary Chief

Two blocks West of Engine 23's firehouse, a crooked fire hydrant marks the spot where, 60 years ago, Wilbur Carmalt nearly lost his life. It was at the intersection of 23rd & G Streets, NW that the fire engine in which Carmalt was riding was struck by a passenger vehicle. The engine flipped, pinning Carmalt's arms under it. As he felt fuel leaking onto his clothing and body, he worked as best he could to pull his limp arms from under the apparatus and get away before the machine caught fire. Unfortunately, two people in the other car were killed, and all the firemen on the truck were hurt. This event would mark Carmalt's last as a DC firefighter.

One day after his 95th birthday, Sgt. Carmalt (retired) was named Honorary Fire/EMS Chief of the District of Columbia in a ceremony at the quarters of Engine 23.

"It was our honor to have you in the service then, and it is an honor to have you here today," said Fire & EMS Chief Adrian H. Thompson as he handed Carmalt a plaque announcing his honorary designation.

Carmalt beamed as he shook the hands of the current crew of Engine 23 and told them stories of what it

was like to do their job in the 1930s and 40s. "We actually had to crank the engines to start them then," said Carmalt, standing next to the 2001 Seagrave pumper that is currently used by firefighters.

After healing from his injuries, Carmalt went on to a successful federal career, serving as the fire prevention chief for the Military District of Washington. He also served for a time as a deputy sheriff in Fairfax County, Virginia, where he lives today.

Carmalt's career is a virtual time capsule of firefighting and law enforcement. One of the first people in the country to use a Two-way radio with the DCFD in 1943, Carmalt was active as a volunteer and officer with the Mt. Vernon Volunteer Fire Department for many years after retiring, and has been an avid outdoor sportsman from childhood. Always active as fisherman, hunter, and competitive skeet shooter, he won the Virginia Veterans Skeet shooting Championship in his Eighties and is now fully retired and living with his youngest son and daughter-in-law.



Wilbur Carmalt, 95, is DC's oldest living retired firefighter.



Chief Thompson (r) appeared July 7th with Prince George's County Fire Chief Ron Blackwell on a special WTOP "Ask the Chief" program discussing a series of arsons. Chiefs Thompson and Blackwell also participated in a number of public meetings on the topic.



The Emerald Society "Firefighters of Washington" donated \$25,000 to Children's National Medical Center for burn trauma treatment and fire prevention education. The proceeds came from the ES charity fishing tournament in which nearly 40 boats participated. Pictured left to right: Lt. Wayne Klinger (tournament coordinator) with Wayne, Jr., ES President Lt. Chris Sefton, CNMC special events manager Dallas Bolen, ES Treasurer Joe Healy, Kim Rogoza, RN, and volunteer coordinator Terry Orzechowski.

## Engine 11 Food Distribution

On Thursday, July 3rd 2003, Engine 11 & Truck 6 worked in coordination with the Office of Customer Service and the non-profit group The Mission in a Ward 1 family Food Distribution. In under 2 hours, the combined efforts resulted in the distribution of over 500 boxes of food. Each box contained enough non-perishable food to feed a family of 4 for a week. The office of

Customer Service distributed Fire Safety educational materials in both English and Spanish to the local community members in the Columbia Heights area. The Mission volunteers also pitched in at the end of the event and cleaned up the common area in front of the Engine. A big round of applause for the support and help of Engine 11 and Truck 6.

## First Annual Fire Safety Olympics

On Tuesday, August 12th 2003, DC Fire and EMS partnered with DC Parks and Recreation to present the First Annual Fire Safety Olympics Program at the Taft Recreation center. Over 80 children participated in a fun filled day of activities that included relays, races and team tug of war! The children from Ridge and Fort Lincoln Recreation Centers learned about fire safety and worked on team building all while having a great time. Many thanks to Engine 17 for setting up the water mist - it was the highlight of the day! A special thanks to Chief Adrian H. Thompson for his opening remarks as well as Acting Captain Henry Lyles for his extraordinary efforts. We are all looking forward to next year's event.



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## Engine Co. 16 Hosts Homeland Security Event

**H**omeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge, Mayor Anthony A. Williams, and representatives from Virginia and Maryland were welcomed by Engine 16 and Truck 3 in a landmark event August 5th illustrating cooperation between regional pub-

lic safety agencies.

Standing in front of the firehouse, backed by Truck 3 and flanked by apparatus from Arlington and Montgomery Counties, Secretary Ridge told guests that the relationship between fire, police and emergency

management departments in the metropolitan Washington region is a model for the nation.

Mayor Williams congratulated the firefighters, police officers and EMS providers in attendance and said they were among the finest in the nation.



Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge (second from left front row) poses with Mayor Anthony Williams and members of Engine 16 and Truck 3 after the summit.

## Firefighters Local Union 36 Joins DC Public Schools and Office Depot in "Back to School Supply Project"

Chief Thompson and DC Firefighters Local Union 36 President Ray Snead joined with officials from DC Public Schools and Office Depot September 2nd in the donation of scores of backpacks and school supplies to students at Simon Elementary School.

This is the second year for the DC Firefighters' "Back To School Supply Project." Simon Elementary, located at 401 Mississippi Ave., SE, was chosen, according to President Snead, "because this is where some of the District's most economically challenged residents live."

Simon Elementary School is cited as among the most improved schools in the District, indicating a 20 percent improvement in math and reading test scores.

"DC Firefighters want to send a strong message to all students — hard work pays," said Snead.

You can ask your fire prevention questions online! The DCFEMS Office of Fire Prevention has an email address for citizens to submit fire code complaints or simply ask questions. The address is [fire\\_prevention@dc.gov](mailto:fire_prevention@dc.gov).

## Truck 15 Receives National Acclaim for Heroism

**T**he crew of Truck-15 was honored June 10th for bravery and service beyond the call of duty. A ceremony was held at the quarters of Engine 26, during which Chief Thompson congratulated the members on receiving Firehouse Magazine's Heroism Award.

On February 15th of last year, Truck 15 was returning to quarters after operating at a fire when they encountered smoke in the 200 block of T St., NE. A citizen ran out into the street and pointed them to 227 T St., where smoke was billowing from the basement of a group home for mentally disabled people. The crew, under the direction of Sgt. Greg Crowe, entered the building and began getting the res-

idents out. Some were either confined to wheelchairs or otherwise had mobility problems and had to be carried from the house. In all, eight people were rescued.

"Here's a perfect example of an alert crew really coming through to help the citizens," said Chief Thompson. "They are a credit to the fire service and to the city and well-deserving of the Firehouse Magazine Heroism Award."

Truck 15 crew members donate the \$250 prize to Heroes, Inc. Pictured left to right are firefighter Christopher Zdobysz, Lt. Walter Webb (RS1 - representing Local 36 and Heroes, Inc.), Chad Breen, Patrick McMahan, Chief Adrian Thompson, and Wayne Darmstead (not pictured: Lt. Gregory Crowe).





# Engine 33 – Truck 8 Hold Open House

Engine 33 and Truck 8 sponsored an Open House Saturday that drew scores of community residents out for food, fun and fellowship

The open house was the latest project assembled by The Working Men Who Care, Inc., a not-for-profit organization that has sponsored several like programs in an effort to reach out to young people in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Hamburgers, hot dogs, fried fish, snow

cones and pop corn were all free fare for citizens, mostly children, who came to the firehouse, located at 101 Atlantic Ave., SE. The Working Men Who Care, Inc. is comprised of DC firefighters and others in the community interested in improving the quality of life for its residents. For more information on how you can get involved, contact WMWC president Rodney Taylor at 240-417-0106.

CPR instruction was a central event at Engine 33 & Truck 8's Open House. Elliot Etter, 5, learns CPR from Sgt. Vincent Frazier.



## Grateful Citizen Thanks Fire/EMS For Saving His Life

Delmar Robinson collapsed in cardiac arrest at his home on Colorado Ave., NW on August 6. Firefighters on Engine 22 and Medics on Medic 11 responded, applied CPR and transported him to the hospital. After receiving excellent care at Washington Hospital Center, Mr. Robinson recovered and was so grateful he decided to show his gratitude by throwing a backyard barbecue for the Fire/EMS personnel and the neighborhood.

"I was a goner, I just know it," said Mr. Robinson, 59. "These folks saved me. They did a great job, and they do this kind of thing every day."



Pictured left to right in front: Burke Riccone, Mr. Robinson and Larry Leland. In the back row: Lt. John Pignataro and Darin Adams.

Firefighting Recruit Class No. 332 graduates Sept. 12th. The 21 recruits training consisted of seven weeks of EMS training and 16 weeks of firefighter training. They begin a one-year probation period.



DC Fire & EMS will be celebrating Fire Prevention week from October 6th–11th, 2003. Events are scheduled to include a kickoff celebration that will highlight our Fire safety partnerships with Amerigroup and Nationwide Insurance.

Please look for further information from the Fire Prevention division and the Office of Customer Service.

## New Museum Preserves Tradition ...

### DC Fire & EMS Museum Coming To Capital Hill

By Walter Gold, President & COO – Friendship Fire Association (FFA)

The official establishment of a DC Fire & EMS Museum is about to become a reality on the top floor of the recently refurbished Engine Co. 3 at New Jersey Ave. and E St., NW at the base of Capital Hill.

The museum's basic collection has been assembled and collected by FFA for more than 53 years in a room atop Engine Co. 31. As soon as reconstruction is completed at Engine 3, the FFA, with the help of Smithsonian Institution volunteers, plans to move that memorabilia from Engine 31 to Engine 3. There, the collection will be housed in a climate-controlled, 3,000 square foot room more easily accessible to all local firefighters and their guests.

The concept to save and preserve the history of the fire department began in March of 1949, when FFA was chartered by the DC Government to "further the aims and ideals" of the fire department and "to collect, preserve and maintain memorabilia of fires, the fire service, apparatus and equipment and kindred articles."

Since then, FFA has held in trust for the department and the community hundreds of items that depict various phases of the department's history. For example, back in the 1800's, when every house in Georgetown was required to have and maintain a bucket of water near the front door for neighborhood firefighting, the late Francis Scott Key had one made of leather. That bucket was one of the first items preserved by FFA, along with a fire department parade hat that looks like something Abraham Lincoln might have worn; the original chief's badge (he was called the Chief Engineer in the beginning); fire helmet shields

from forerunners of our department; a brass chief's trumpet, which was used to give instructions on the fire grounds long before two-way radios were invented; and the original ticket-tape notification of a fire at the White House in 1932.

All of those items, along with hundreds of other historic artifacts, were packed in special boxes and containers by Smithsonian volunteers more than a year ago. They have been stored in FFA's deteriorating museum on the third floor of Engine 31, awaiting the removal of lead paint and asbestos from Engine 3.

When Engine 3 was reactivated in March of 2000, former Chief Tippettt intended for the unused space on the third floor to become FFA's new museum. FFA finally got a signed 15-year lease for the space from the DC Government in September of 2001, but the lead paint had not been blasted from the walls and ceilings. So, rather than risk damaging FFA's historic items, it was decided not to move the collection until the current abatement and reconstruction on the building's interior was completed this fall.

After Chief Thompson leads the dedication of the new museum later this year, FFA will raise the funds needed to install a handicapped elevator and new bathroom at Engine 3 so the museum can meet building code standards for general public access.

"Also, it is our goal for every new recruit to see the history of the department as they begin their careers and add to that history," said Mark Tennyson, FFA's curator.